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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 000578

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIA -- DODIK CALLS ON SERB SOLDIERS TO QUIT
GEORGIAN EXERCISE

REF: SARAJEVO 554

Classified By: Amb. Charles English for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) During a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of a new Mercatur supermarket in Banja Luka on May 7, Republika Srpska (RS) Prime Minister Dodik called on Serb members of Bosnia's Armed Forces to disobey lawful orders and to refuse to participate in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Cooperative Longbow/Lancer exercise beginning in Georgia this week. Despite the fact that the exercise was approved by Bosnia's Tri-Presidency and leadership of Bosnia's multi-ethnic Ministry of Defense (reftel), Dodik alleged that Bosnia's participation in the exercise was not a product of "serious political consideration." He said that while he did not care about relations between Russia and Bosnia, he was concerned about the relationship between Russia and the RS. He called on Serbs who had already deployed to return, and "Serbs who are supposed to go there not to go."

Ambassador Stresses U.S. Concern

¶2. (C) Ambassador called Dodik to stress U.S. displeasure with the statement. The Ambassador said that such statements undermine state institutions and call into question Dodik's supposed commitment to Dayton. The embassy will release a press statement this afternoon, May 8, saying the same, the Ambassador said, unless Dodik retracts his statement by that time. Dodik tried to downplay his comments, saying he was just expressing his opinion, that he was under "internal pressure" in the RS, that it will anyway look like a personal defeat for him because the soldiers will deploy as planned, and that he thought that the Minister of Defense made the decision on his own until Serb member of the Presidency Radmanovic called him.

Members of Presidency React

¶3. (SBU) Dodik's statement provoked a strong reaction from Bosnia's other leaders. Croat member of Bosnia's Tri-Presidency called on High Representative Inzko to use the Bonn powers to "forbid (Dodik) to carry out any political activity, because of evident violation of constitutional organization of BiH, the Dayton Peace Agreement and because of serious consequences arising from Dodik's activity." Komsic also called on the BiH Prosecutor's Office to file criminal charges against Dodik for instigating criminal activity by urging soldiers to desert. Bosniak member of the Presidency Haris Silajdzic responded on television that Bosnia's participation in the exercise was an important part of the government's obligation to make positive steps towards NATO integration.

14. (C) Silajdzic added that the Presidency had approved Bosnia's participation in the exercise before the (recent) conflict in Georgia began. Serb member of the Presidency Radmanovic made no statement after Dodik's, but the press is widely quoting a statement he made two days earlier stating that Bosnia's Minister of Defense made the decision to participate in the exercise in accordance with the law and the defense training plan previously approved by the Presidency. (NOTE: The plan was approved in 2008. END NOTE.) Radmanovic said in that statement, "(The Presidency) could have prevented participation in the exercise if its stance on the issue were united." In a private meeting with the Ambassador two days earlier, Radmanovic told him that he had worked to support Bosnia's participation in the exercise but that he was under personal pressure for his support of the exercise.

Defense Minister: Serb Soldiers Will Ignore Dodik

15. (C) Bosnia's Minister of Defense Selmo Cikotic (Bosniak) sent an unsolicited note to us through his cabinet that he had spoken to Bosnia's Chief of Defense Milojcic (Serb) about the statement. He reported that Milojcic assured him that "there would not be any rebellions and the chain of command will not be disobeyed." We believe that six of Bosnia's 17 soldiers deploying to Georgia are Serb (based on their names), including three captains who have already deployed. The other three Serb soldiers are slated to depart May 20. We have confirmed with organizers on the ground that all Bosnian soldiers have reported as scheduled so far, and

SARAJEVO 00000578 002 OF 002

organizers will report to us immediately if there are absences for any reason.

COMMENT

16. (C) While we do not expect insubordination or a breakdown in the military chain of command, Dodik's comments represent a direct and unacceptable challenge to a state-level institution critical to Bosnia's security, the Dayton Peace Agreement, and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Dodik's claim that the decision for the Armed Forces to participate in the exercise was political is patently false and deliberately misleading. Dodik regularly asserts his commitment to and support for Dayton, but his comments raise profound questions about whether the international community can safely conclude that Dodik is prepared to fully comply with the Dayton Peace Agreement and whether he is prepared to refrain from rhetoric or actions that would threaten or violate the agreement.
ENGLISH